

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-10
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BRUSSELS FOR USEC

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, JA
SUBJECT: MARCH UNEMPLOYMENT EXCEEDS 1.41 MILLION

REF: TOKYO 5700

1. PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE ANNOUNCED APRIL 28 THAT
UNEMPLOYMENT REACHED 1.41 MILLION IN MARCH 1978, HIGHEST
TOTAL SINCE MARCH 1959 AND THIRD HIGHEST FIGURE SINCE
MONTHLY LABOR FORCE SURVEY INITIATED IN 1953. FIGURE
REPRESENTS INCREASE OF 140,000 OVER MARCH 1977 AND 50,000
OVER FEBRUARY 1978 (REFTEL). SEASONALLY ADJUSTED UNEMPLOY-
MENT RATE WAS 2.12 PERCENT, SLIGHTLY HIGHER THAN 2.08
PERCENT RECORDED IN FEBRUARY BUT LOWER THAN DECEMBER 1977'S
2.14 PERCENT RATE. FIGURES RELEASED SAME DAY BY MINISTRY
OF LABOR SHOW 0.55 PERCENT RATIO OF JOB OPENINGS TO
JOB SEEKERS, MARGINAL IMPROVEMENT OVER FEBRUARY'S 0.54
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RATIO.

2. SIZE OF TOTAL LABOR FORCE, 52.97 MILLION, REPRESENTS
670,000 INCREASE OVER MARCH 1977, BUT 37.74 MILLION WAGE
AND SALARY EARNERS FIGURE INDICATES DECREASE OF 70,000
IN SAME PERIOD WHILE NUMBER OF MALES EMPLOYED IN MARCH
1978 WAS 330,000 LESS THAN IN MARCH 1977, REPRESENTING

SEASONALLY ADJUSTED DECREASE OF 1.2 PERCENT, FEMALE WORKERS INCREASED BY 260,000. IN SAME YEARLY TIME FRAME, TOTAL NUMBER PART-TIME AND DAY LABORERS INCREASED BY 200,000, WHILE FULL-TIME REGULAR EMPLOYEES DECREASED BY 270,000. SECTORALLY, WORKERS IN MANUFACTURING 470,000 FEWER THAN IN MARCH 1977, WHILE NUMBER OF CONSTRUCTION WORKERS GREW BY 200,000 (4.7 PERCENT SEASONALLY ADJUSTED).

3. WORSENING OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN MANUFACTURING, GROWTH IN SIZE OF FEMALE WORK FORCE (MOST OF WHOM REPORTEDLY ARE PART-TIMERS RETURNING TO LABOR MARKET OR NEWLY EMPLOYED WOMEN HOLDING LOWEST PAYING JOBS) AND SLIGHT INCREASE IN AVERAGE HOURS WORKER PER WEEK APPEAR TO INDICATE THAT LARGE ENTERPRISES STILL UNWILLING TO EXPAND SIZE OF PERMANENT LABOR FORCE BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE ECONOMIC CONDITIONS REMAIN UNSETTLED. ANOTHER FACTOR REDUCING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN MANUFACTURING SECTOR IS CONTINUING PROGRAM OF PERSONNEL RETRENCHMENT BEING CONDUCTED BY FIRMS IN STRUCTURALLY DEPRESSED INDUSTRIES SUCH AS TEXTILES AND SHIPBUILDING. NEVERTHELESS, ACCORDING TO PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE AND MINISTRY OF LABOR, INCREASE IN NUMBER OF CONSTRUCTION WORKERS AND SLIGHT IMPROVEMENT IN JOB OFFER RATIO SHOW THAT EMPLOYMENT EFFECTS OF GOJ'S LARGE SCALE INVESTMENTS IN PUBLIC WORKS PROSPECTS BEGINNING TO BE FELT. THEREFORE, UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURES (WHICH UNCLASSIFIED

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DID NOT REACH MINISTRY OF LABOR'S "WORST CASE" PREDICTION OF 1.5 MILLION IN MARCH) NEED TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH OTHER INDICATORS WHICH REFLECT STEADY BUT SLOW IMPROVEMENT IN OVERALL JAPANESE ECONOMIC PROSPECTS. SHERMAN

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